

1 December 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Current Support Staff, ORR
THROUGH: Chief, Industrial Division, ORR *OMP*
FROM: Chief, Guided Missile Branch, D/I
SUBJECT: Comment on Khrushchev Statement in Budapest

1. Khrushchev's latest rocket statement that the Soviet Union has a stockpile of rockets with nuclear warheads sufficient "to raze to the ground all our potential enemies" appears to be heavily propaganda-oriented, and intended to imply a considerably greater Soviet capability than is believed to exist, particularly with respect to the ICBM. It could have a reasonable basis in fact only defined and accepted as the ability to launch a few multi-megaton ICBMs each against several key U.S. urban areas. The capability to have such a force deployed at present is consistent with current estimates.

2. Khrushchev's language implies attack on urban and industrial areas. In the past, Khrushchev has referred to the possibility of "destroying" such targets with a very small number of missiles. On this basis, even if the USSR has at present an operational force of only 10-20 ICBMs which could be used to attack a few major U.S. cities, Khrushchev might feel justified in claiming that he can "raze" the U.S. His statement therefore strongly suggests that the USSR now has an initial operational capability with ICBMs (current U.S. estimate of IOC: by 1 January 1960). However, if series production actually started about the beginning of 1959, as Khrushchev has repeatedly indicated, it is unlikely that the USSR has been able to produce and deploy by now a sufficient number of ICBMs to attack and destroy with a high degree of confidence a majority of the major U.S. population and industrial centers.

3. Despite the threatening tone of Khrushchev's statement, it is most unlikely that the USSR would deliberately initiate general war by attacking U.S. cities. An initial attack would almost certainly be intended to destroy the major portion of the U.S. retaliatory forces. To accomplish this, the USSR would require a force of several hundred ICBMs, which could not have


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been produced and deployed since the beginning of 1959.

4. With respect to "potential enemies" in Western Europe, it is probably true that the USSR has produced sufficient numbers of 700 n.m. and 1,100 n.m. missiles to attack successfully most major European cities. Alternatively, these missiles would be sufficient for an attack against a substantial portion of the Western striking force in Europe and Africa. There is inconclusive evidence that the USSR may now be deploying 700 n.m. missiles in East Germany, which would significantly increase Soviet capabilities to attack Western Europe.

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